

# Salina Canyon Also Had A D

Promontory, May 10, 1869, Leland Stanford tapped a Golden Spike into a laurel tie, thereby marking completion of the nation's first transcontinental railroad.

How many Salina residents remember December 18, 1929 when Dr. C. Leo Merrill, mayor of Salina wielded the hammer that drove the Golden Spike connecting the big mining property with the outside world. The place was the terminal of the Denver & Rio Grande branch line in the yards of the Sevier Valley Coal Company's property in Salina Canyon.

It was a day for great celebration. Citizens had looked forward for many years to the completion of the branch line. They talked of the line running on to Castle Valley where valley people could use the route as the outlet for their farm and livestock products. With the completion of the railroad and the opening of the many coal and salt mines in the canyon nothing could afford Salina a brighter and more prosperous outlook.

H. E. Lewis, vice president and general manager for the Sevier Valley Coal Company had been the guiding light in having the railroad built to the coal company.

A special train traveled to the mine over the new line and some forty passengers availed themselves of taking the first passenger ride. Charles Ferguson was the conductor.

More than \$1,000,000 had been expended in connecting the coal property by the branch line from the Salina station.

This wasn't the first attempt at building a railroad in Salina Canyon. Large and valuable deposits of coal known to exist in the canyon stimulated the first railroad enterprise in 1903. A line was constructed by the Castle Valley Railroad Company at an expenditure of \$437,441.81. The line was largely destroyed by floods before a train had ever operated on it.

In 1908 the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad acquired title and in January 1914 applied for right-of-way over 20 miles. The application was granted in 1915.

As no steps were taken to resume construction of the railroad, the abandoned bed was used as a highway grade by the forest

D&RGW asked for a guarantee from the two major coal mines, Salina Coal Co. and Sevier Valley Coal Company to each advance \$112,500, a total of \$225,000 to the company, this amount to be secured by an interest-bearing note and to be refunded to the coal companies at a rate of 25¢ per ton shipped. Mr. Lehman of Salina Canyon Coal Company and Mr. Sumner, Sevier Valley Coal Company agreed.

During the five years of railroad construction strife between the railroad and those interested in building a highway continued. Due to grading of the bed for the railroad company, motor and vehicular traffic was greatly impaired and often traffic was held up for some time.

J. S. Pyeatte, president of the railroad said, "We want to locate the road economically but with the highway contention we find we are being crowded from our original right-of-way. Thus far we have aided materially in keeping the highway open, but our company cannot build the railroad and the highway both."

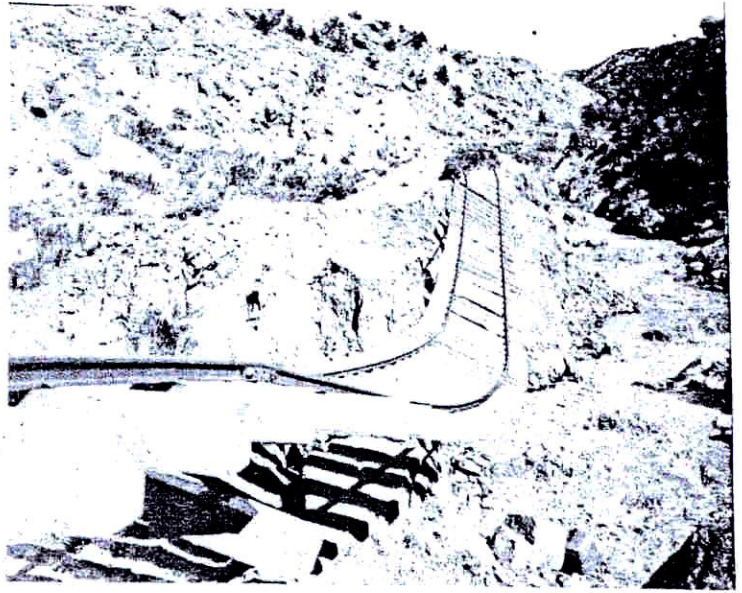
Another troubled point was the 28 crossings the railroad made over the highway, making it dangerous for road travel and train safety. Eventually all but eleven of the crossings were eliminated.

A cloud burst in August 1929 caused an estimated \$30,000 damage to the nearly completed line. Gravel was washed from beneath the tracks leaving ties and rails suspended.

December 1929, the line was completed and the Golden Spike was driven. Headlines in the Salina Sun read, "DRIVING 'GOLDEN SPIKE' MARKS ADVANCE OF BIG COAL INDUSTRY" "COMPLETION OF MILLION DOLLAR BRANCH IN CANYON EPOCHAL EVENT - HUNDREDS ATTEND CEREMONY"

The first three carloads of coal from the Sevier Valley Mine arrived in Salina on July 4, 1930. The three cars of coal aggregating 115 tons and the first in history to be brought by rail from a deposit in Salina Canyon were immediately disposed of. The first car was taken by the Salina Hospital, the second went to the Sevier Valley Merc. and the third to Richfield.

The train hauled coal for one



FLOODS were a continual hazard to the railroad in Salina Canyon as indicated by this early-day picture. High, rushing water swept bed from beneath the tracks leaving them suspended in mid-air.

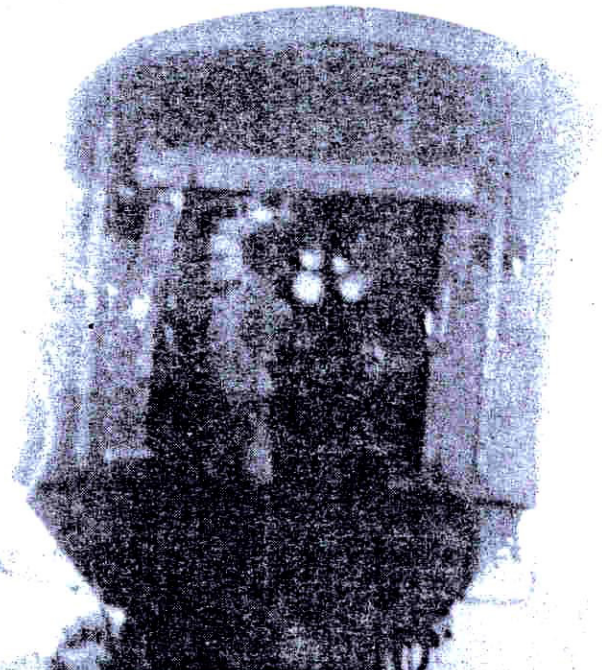
had not received their pay checks regularly caused the miners to walk out and for a time the mine was idle.

For many months the mine run only occasionally and a walk out of miners in June 1934 stopped all work at the mine.

In December failure to pay interest on outstanding bonds issued by the Sevier Valley Coal Company and the unexplained delay in operating the property

resulted in action being brought by the stockholders to foreclose on the property.

With the closing of the mine the railroad also ceased to operate. The great industry that was to be the boon to Sevier County ended. A railroad that cost well over a million dollars to construct operated for three years. The dream of an industry that would be heralded throughout the west came to an end.





mission and Sevier County, even the tunnels built by the railroad were utilized for the wagonroad.

Salina residents were interested in having a highway constructed through the canyon and wanted the major part of the railroad bed for this use. In 1925 they filed suit against D&RGWRR to annul the franchise for the right-of-way. They contended the right-of-way had been forfeited through failure to comply with the time limit and set forth that the public interest required action.

The judge ruled against forfeiture. He held no other company desired to build a railroad through the canyon and that except for some crossings there was ample room for a highway alongside the right-of-way.

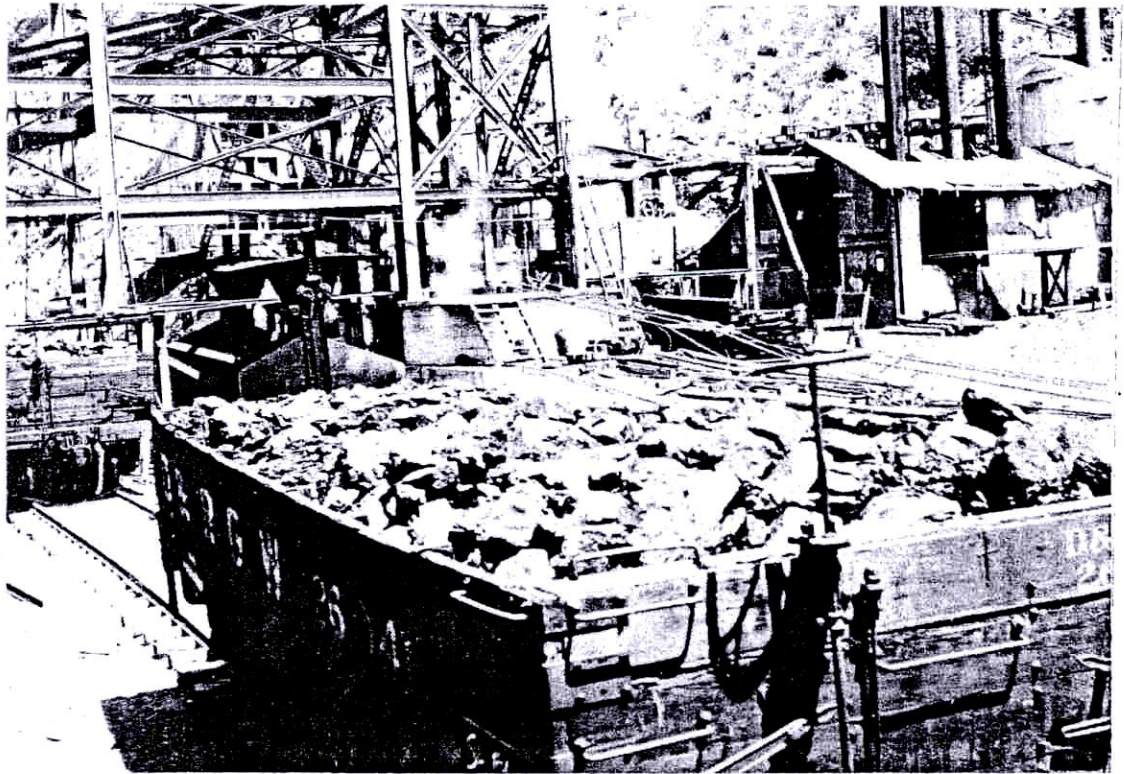
"It would be a sheer act of confiscation to declare the right of way forfeited so as to permit appropriation of the unfinished railroad grade as a public highway and no public interest would be served by forfeiture," stated the judge.

After settling the right-of-way problems, the D&RGW outlined a five-year program for construction of a new railroad to the coal mine. They planned to spend between \$75,000 to \$100,000 annually until the road was completed.

again when another flood washed out many miles of the line causing \$150,000 damage. Repairs were made and shipment resumed in a few weeks.

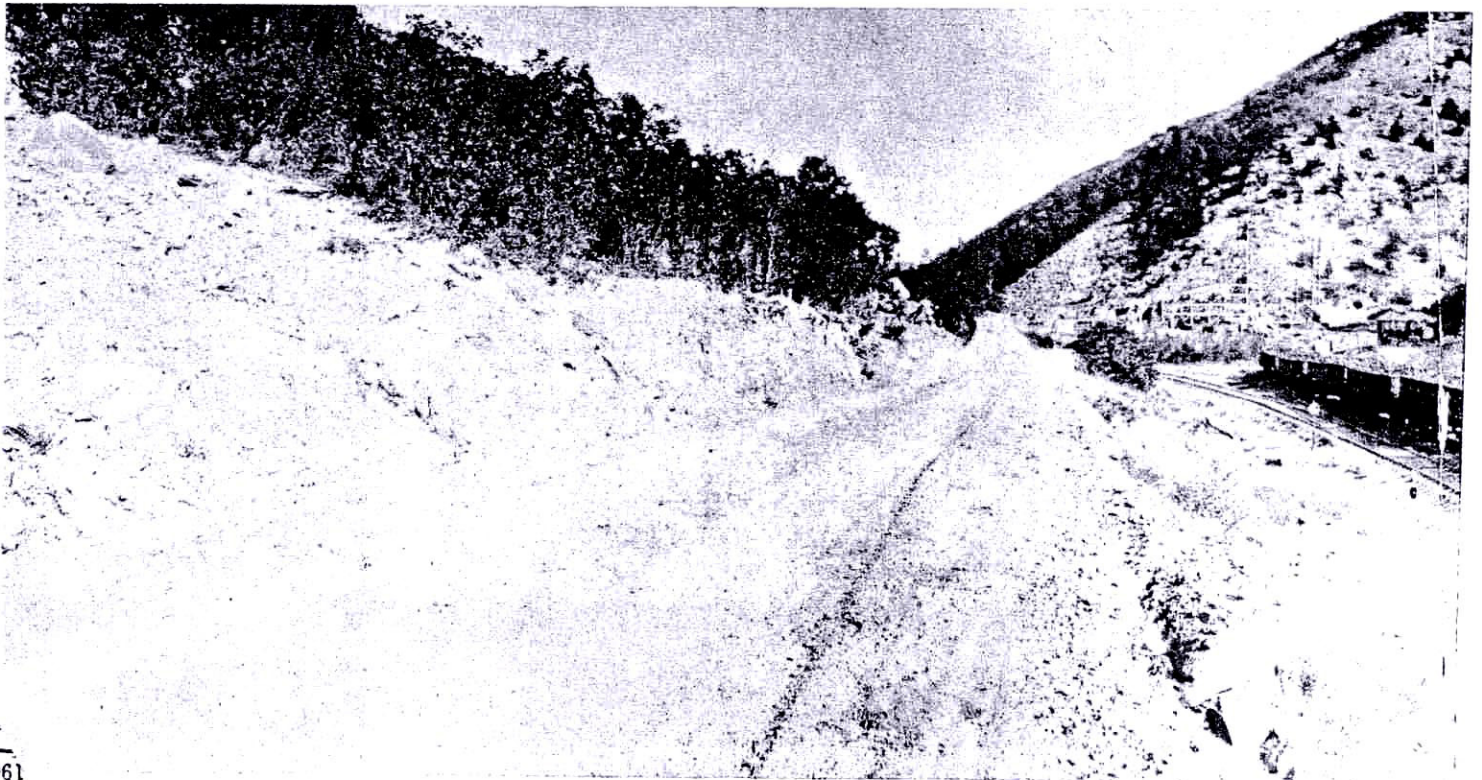
Following the flood came the great depression. Coal sales were slow, money was hard to get. Discontent because coal miners

CABOOSE — Trainmen's car used during construction of the railroad.



BUSY — Railroad coal cars are lined up at the Sevier Valley Coal Mine near the summit in Salina

Canyon, receiving their load in readiness for shipment to the valley below.



LOADED COAL CARS are alongside main highway, pictured at the left, waiting for a



# Living of the "Golden Spike"

## Monticello Paper Pays Honor To Two Former Salina Residents

Last week's issue of the San Juan Record recognized two former Salina men now living in Monticello, Dr. Merz Hugentobler, dentist and Rod Rasmussen, teacher.

"Every community gladly receives a professional man into its midst. But this community was more than glad to receive our business profile - Dr. Merz Hugentobler. Not only did he fill a professional need of our community - that of a dentist - but the entire family became such an integral part of the area and community.

Monticello had been without a dentist for quite a spell and it was with open arms that they took into it's fold Dr. Hugentobler. He opened his office on Center Street right next door to Milady's Beauty Shop, outfitted it very professionally with new and excellent equipment and hung out his shingle, so to speak.

Dr. Hugentobler was born Oct. 13, 1932 in Salina, the only child of Mr. and Mrs. Lee A. Hugentobler. He spent most of his life in this small community until he went to college. His father farmed in the area and his mother was a music teacher in the Salina area for over 40 years. She was also

blind and this made her a most unusual individual, teaching lessons to students who could not but learn from one such as she.

Merz attended the University of Utah for one year, worked on road construction operating heavy equipment and did a bit of farming to help his way in school. It was in 1955 that he married his charming wife, Marilyn Bell, of Koosharem, Utah. He then returned to school - this time at Utah State University where he attended for two years, receiving his Bachelor of Science degree in 1962 with a major in science and chemistry.

Knowing by now what his aim in life was, Merz moved his family to Kansas City, Mo. in 1961 where he attended the University of Missouri School of Dentistry at Kansas City.

May 29, 1965 was a proud day for he and his family - it was on this date he received his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree from the dental school. He started a practice in St. Joseph, Mo., after his graduation but after a year the family decided to make their permanent home in Utah and they moved to Monticello in June of 1966.

During the years that Merz was

seeking his education both he and his wife worked at many and varied jobs to finance the education. He has done about everything - from washing city buses, operating heavy equipment, helping build snowmobiles, working in hospital medical records, to selling pots and pans for a living. Mrs. Hugentobler also assisted in the educational project, working as a typist, doing sewing and baby sitting in her home, as well as working in our local bank for some period of time after arriving here.

Another distinction the family has - they have five children and they were all born in a different town or state. Marilee, age 12, is the only daughter and she was born in Salt Lake City. Ten-year-old Melvin was born in Richfield; 8-year old Mark in Logan; 6-year old Michael in Kansas City and the baby - Merrill Merz, was born in Monticello about eight months ago.

Merz was active in school sports, lettering in track and basketball when in school. He still enjoys the outdoors and can be seen walking to and from work regularly. He also keeps himself busy, not only with his local practice, but two days a week he flies to Escalante, Utah where he performs services for the residents of that community who have no dentist.

The community is fortunate in having a man of Dr. Hugentobler's caliber in its midst and if you haven't called on him professionally, do so. You will be delighted with his services."

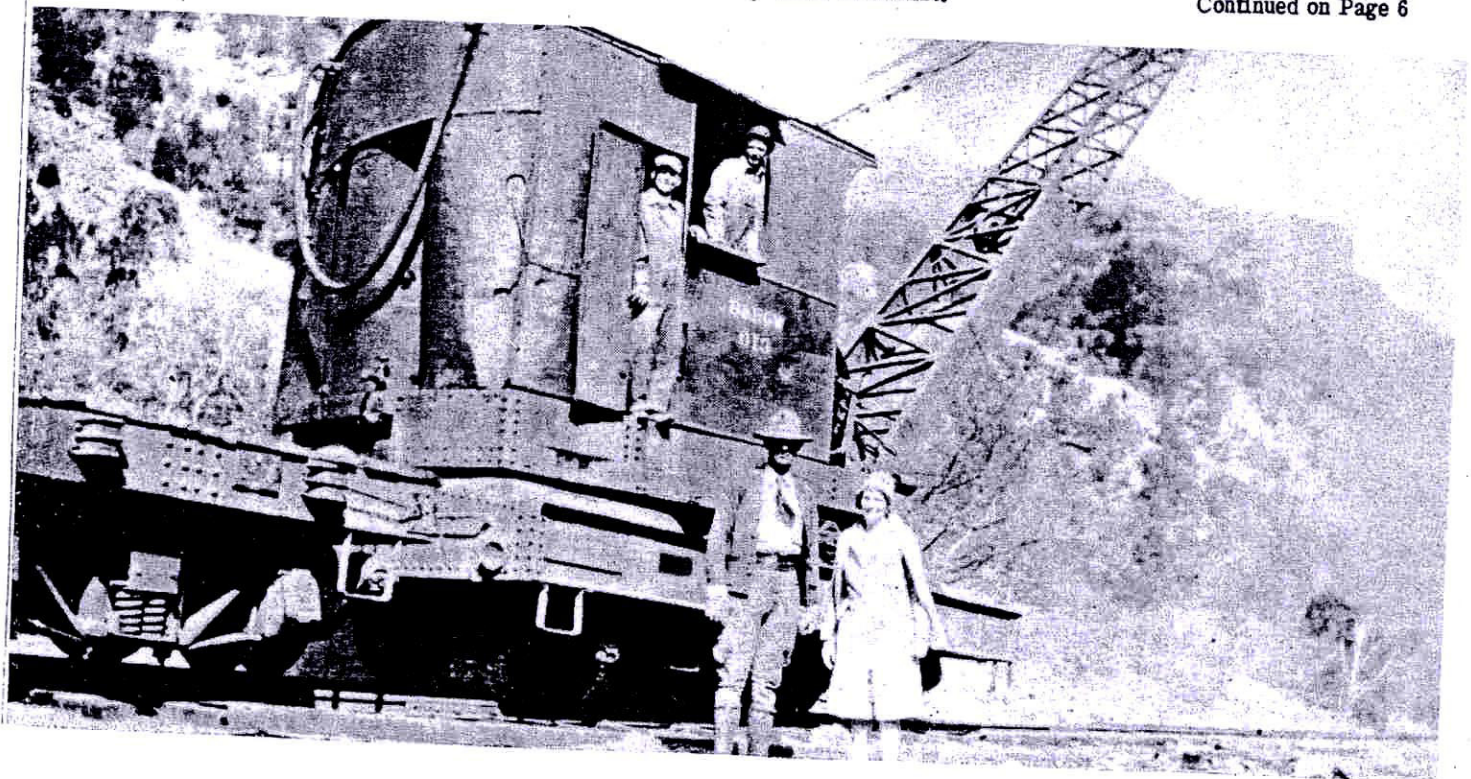
### LET'S GIVE ROD A HAND

"Much has been said and written about our wonderful kids at Monticello High School and the most enviable record they have made this past school year. They have excelled in all sports and have made impressive gains in state sporting events.

Much has also been said about the coaches who have given so much of themselves and their talents to the development of the young men of our community. All of these accolades are just and well deserved.

But we feel that there is another young man who is deserving of much praise and perhaps a lot of the people are not aware of the part he has played in the local boys' sporting events. This young man is Rod Rasmussen, who teaches at Monticello High School. Last year Rod took on the assignment of covering the local sports for the newspaper and for the boys as well and he has done a masterful job. He has been at every event possible and has taken some marvelous pictures of the students in action.

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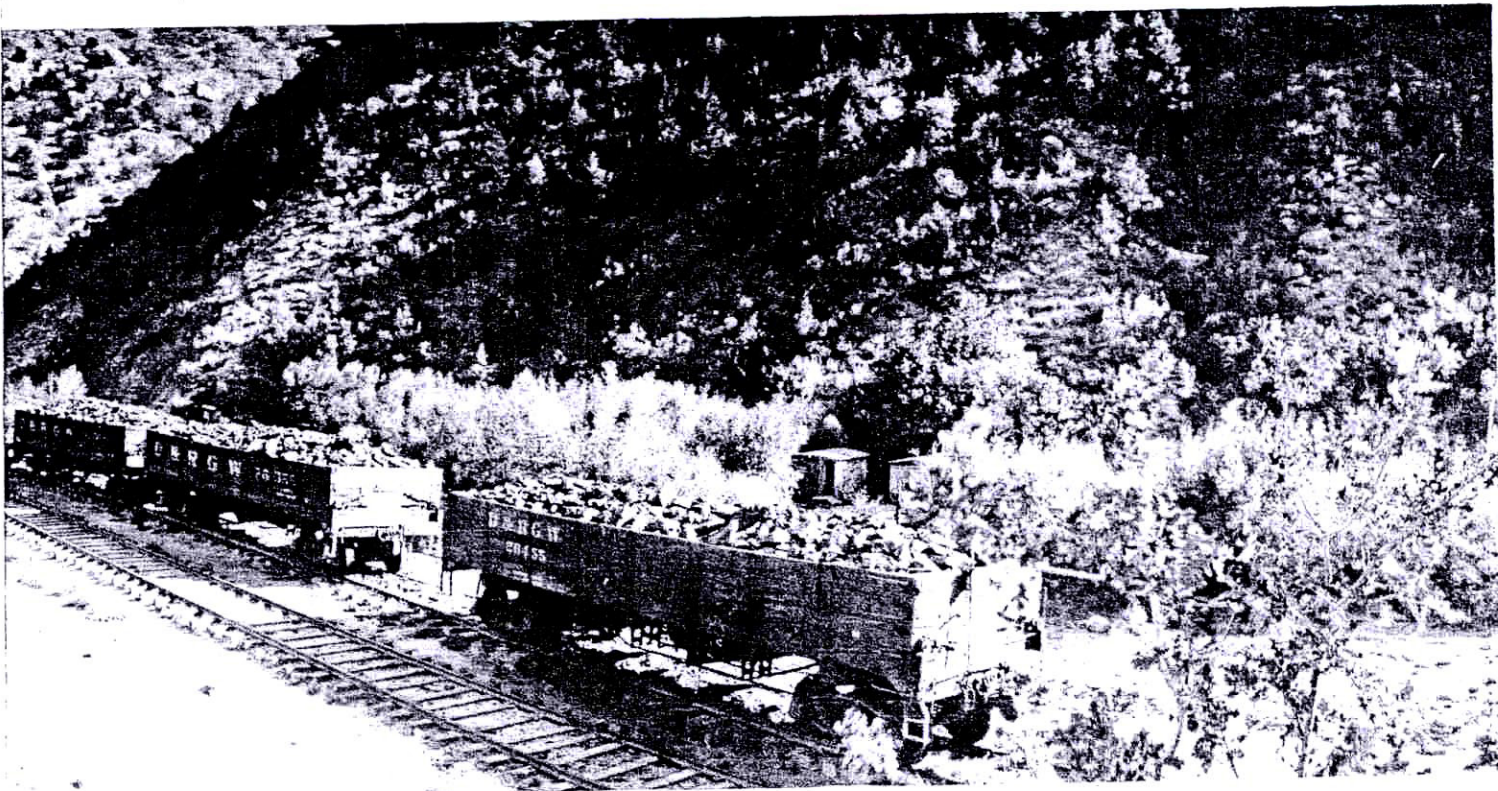




LAYING RAILS — Railroad section foreman Carl Anderson and Mrs. Anderson pictured in front of machine used to lay rails during 1931 construction in Salina Canyon.



WASHOUT — Workmen repairing railroad following major flood in August 1930.



ovement down Salina Canyon. The coal tipple can be seen in the distance.